

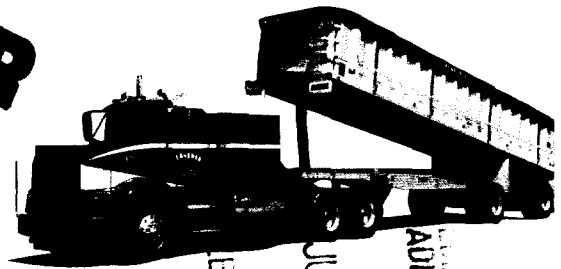
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**GUY
HEAVENER**
Inc.

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Insured Common Carriers

July 26, 1996



FHWA Docket No. MC-96-18
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
Office of the Chief Counsel
HCC-10, Room 4232
400 Seventh Street, SW.
Washington, DC 20590

QA-20647

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FHWA-97-2299-42

SUBJECT: Comments for Safety Rating Proposal

To Whom it may concern:

Guy Heavener, Inc. is a for hire motor carrier of bulk aggregate materials located in Harleysville, PA. GHI has been in business 56 years and has operated a fleet of tractor-trailers throughout the Northeastern part of the nation for more than thirty-five years. Trucking operations involve primarily dump trailers.

I would like to make comments on three areas: 1) Safety rating categories, 2) Basis of safety ratings, and 3) Accidents and other safety related rating factors.

Safety Rating Categories. Categories should be retained, but the "Conditional" category should be eliminated. Conditional suggests something less than satisfactory, which in fact may not be the case. Carriers should not be put in a bad light just because they have not yet been rated.

Basis of Safety Ratings. The rating procedure should not be separated from the enforcement and compliance process; they are intimately related. Compliance with regulations that are agreed to be contributing factors to safety should certainly influence ratings.

Ratings should not be based solely upon accident ratios, although such ratios should be one of the most heavily weighted components. Safety ratings should also take into account out of service violations, their frequency and seriousness; operating exposures such as average length of haul and; and population density of routes. A carrier that operates mostly within a multi-state metropolitan area should not be subject to the same evaluation as one that has an average length of haul in excess of 1,000 miles through the midwest.

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Accidents and Other Safety Related Rating Factors. On the road performance should certainly be evaluated in light of various levels of exposure. Not only should accidents be measured against miles traveled, they should also be considered for severity and causes that predict severity, along with the operating environment. For example, a rear end accident due to low speed, heavy stop and go traffic in New York City should not be given the same consideration as one resulting from inattentive deceleration on a lightly populated interstate highway.

Preventability should also be considered. Certainly a rear end accident caused by a commercial driver's inattentiveness should be considered differently than one from being cut off short in heavy metropolitan traffic. As an extreme example, commercial drivers can hit others in the rear, OR they can be hit in the rear. Surely such extremes with similar damages would not be considered equal.

A recordable accident should only result from injury, death, or a dollar damage threshold. The towaway criterion should be eliminated. Commercial vehicles get towed for all kinds of insignificant reasons, e.g., no air pressure, flat tires, no lights, no clutch. Such problems are not necessarily significant or accident related.

To summarize, safety ratings need to be restructured. A rating should make a more clear statement of a carrier's status with FHWA and more accurately reflect performance within operating environments. Thank you.

Respectfully Submitted,


Gerald Heavener
President

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